

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1. A method for preparing a milk base for the  
5 production of enhanced yield coagulated milk  
products, said method comprising admixing milk with  
at least one structurally expanded cellulose to  
form said milk base.
- 10 2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said at  
least one structurally expanded cellulose is  
admixed in dry form with said milk.
- 15 3. A method as claim in claim 1, wherein said at least  
one structurally expanded cellulose is admixed in  
paste form with said milk.
- 20 4. A composition for the production of enhanced yield  
coagulated milk products, said composition  
comprising milk and at least one structurally  
expanded cellulose.
- 25 5. A composition as claimed in claim 4, containing  
from about 0.05% to about 0.5% of said at least one  
structurally expanded cellulose, based on the  
weight of the milk component of said composition.
- 30 6. A composition as claimed in claim 4, further  
comprising at least one hydrocolloid, selected from  
the group consisting of xanthan gum, guar gum,  
locust bean gum, carboxymethyl cellulose, gelan  
gum, konjac gum or pectin.
- 35 7. A composition as claimed in claim 4, further  
comprising at least one other physical form of

cellulose.

- 5           8.    A composition as claimed in claim 7, wherein said  
            at least one other physical form of cellulose is  
            microcrystalline cellulose.
- 10           9.    A composition as claimed in claim 7, wherein said  
            at least one other physical form of cellulose is  
            powdered cellulose.
10.   A composition as claimed in claim 4, further  
                comprising a chemically-modified cellulose.
- 15           11.   A composition as claimed 10, wherein said  
            chemically-modified cellulose is at least one  
            selected from the group consisting of hydroxyethyl  
            cellulose, hydroxypropyl cellulose, methyl  
            cellulose or ethyl cellulose.
- 20           12.   A composition as claimed in claim 4, further  
                comprising  $\beta$ 1-4 glucans.
13.   A composition as claimed in claim 4, wherein said  
                milk component is full fat milk.
- 25           14.   A composition as claimed in claim 4, wherein said  
                milk component is skim milk.
15.   A method for enhancing curd yield of coagulated  
30              milk products, comprising:
- (a) providing a milk base  
                    comprising an admixture of  
                    milk and at least one  
35                  structurally expanded

- cellulose;
- 5 (b) inoculating said milk base  
with a culture appropriate  
for the coagulated milk  
product to be produced;
- (c) forming a coagulum from the  
inoculated milk base;
- (d) cutting said coagulum into  
pieces; and
- 10 (e) expressing water from the  
coagulum pieces to form  
isolated curds.
16. A method as claimed in claim 15, which optionally  
15 includes adding a coagulant to the inoculated milk  
base.
17. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said  
coagulated milk product is natural cheese.
- 20 18. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said  
coagulated milk product is processed cheese.
19. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said  
25 structurally expanded cellulose is produced from  
cellulose which has undergone microbial  
fermentation.
20. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said  
30 structurally expanded cellulose is produced by  
subjecting refined cellulose to structure modifying  
shear forces generated by surfaces rotating at high  
velocity.
- 35 21. A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein refined

cellulose is subjected to said shear forces in a disc refiner.

- 5           22. A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein refined cellulose is subjected to said shear forces in a colloid mill.
- 10           23. A method as claimed in claim 20, wherein said refined cellulose is derived from wood, cotton liners or nonwoody plant tissue.
- 15           24. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said structurally expanded cellulose is produced by subjecting refined cellulose to structure modifying impact at high pressure.
- 20           25. A method as claimed in claim 24, wherein said refined cellulose is derived from wood, cotton liners or nonwoody plant tissue.
- 25           26. A method as claimed in claim 15, wherein said structurally expanded cellulose is produced by subjecting refined cellulose to structure modifying shear forces generated by high speed, wet micromilling.
- 30           27. A method as claimed in claim 26, wherein said refined cellulose is derived from wood, cotton liners or nonwoody plant tissue.
28. A processed cheese formed from the isolated curds of claim 15.
- 35           29. A naturally aged cheese formed from the isolated curds of claim 15.

30. A cottage cheese formed from the isolated curds of claim 15.